Doctor Whodunnit

A locked room murder mystery, coming this April!

TIM FOLEY
FEB 02, 2024

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I've written another Fifth Doctor Adventure - and this time he's solving an impossible murder!

FULL CAST AUDIO DRAMA STARRING
PETER DAVISON, JANET FIELDING, SARAH SUTTON AND MATTHEW WATERHOUSE
POLICE PUBLIC CALL BOX
BBC
DOCTOR WHO
THE DREAM TEAM
BIG FOR THE LOVE OF STORIES

Gorgeous cover from Ryan Alpin here... look at those glimpses of St Andrews!

This April box set (which I'm delighted to see I'm sharing with writer Lizzie Hopley and her DREAM CRABS!) features the Season 19 team. Yes, I have written for one of my all-time favourite crews. They really are the dream team to me.

You can preorder the adventures here.

My story is "THE MERFOLK MURDERS", a two-hour whodunnit set in St Andrews, Scotland during WWII. Disclaimer: there are no actual mermaids in the story. I went to uni in St Andrews and the society in question, the Merfolk, is a playful riff on the theatre group that let me put on my very first plays. I'm pretty sure there weren't any deaths though. Except my works on opening night, ho ho.

St Andrews - a truly stunning medieval town in Scotland.

As with any murder mystery - things are not all they seem! Here are THREE additional reasons for why you should be excited by this April release.

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1. This is a proper, “fair play”, fully-clued whodunnit. There’s no alien interference, no sci-fi explanation - this is a mystery you can listen along to and solve yourself. (There was even a point in the script where I put in the stage directions: *You now have all the clues! Who murdered* ____?) If you love your *Poirot* adaptations, your *Midsomer Murders*, this is the audio for you.
2. It isn’t just a murder mystery. This is an IMPOSSIBLE CRIME mystery! What do I mean by that? Well, it’s a variation on the classic ‘locked room’ set up. You have to not only solve whodunnit - but HOWdunnit as well. Think *Jonathan Creek*, if that’s a touchstone that works for you, I realise TV from the 90/00s is really quite old now. The story came about due to my and (script editor John) Dorney’s love of the works of John Dickson-Carr. He’s an influential golden age crime writer (who I’ve mentioned on a previous sub!). There are great modern-day successors to him too like Paul Halter and Tom Mead, big fan.
   Trust me, writing a murder mystery on audio is difficult enough. Writing a locked room murder mystery when people can’t even see the rooms… wowee. But, I’d had a bit of practice, because…
3. This tale (as hinted in the press release) is the first in a TRILOGY. Doctor Who will be solving other impossible crimes in other ranges. I’m so excited about this I could burst. But that’s all I’m allowed to say. Before the Big Finish Intern gets me and you’re solving another murder (my own). Just know that, whether you like this story or not, more are coming!

I have written longer stories than this, more timey-wimey stories than this, audios with more characters and locations and events… but THE MERFOLK MURDERS is truly one of the most complex things I’ve ever written. Trying to come up with a satisfying mystery that doesn’t reduce your characters to 2D playing pieces is an incredible balancing act. And think about it, I have FOUR detectives here, it’s not like we’re going to believe that any of the TARDIS team bumped someone off (actually, I dunno, side-eyes at Tegan). That’s a lot of characters to juggle and a lot of narrative

arcs to weave.

I hope I pull it off. I hope you don't figure it out in the first five minutes. But I want you to know, however hard it was, it was so so FUN. Just wait till you find out the guest cast. And wow, Peter Davison delivering his denouement… you'd almost think he'd had some experience playing a detective before, wink wink.

I grew up with murder mysteries on audio. I loved John Moffatt as Poirot, June Whitfield as Marple, Clive Merrison as Sherlock Holmes… they're classics of BBC radio that I find myself returning to again and again. To have actually written one is a great honour. It's not something I ever thought I'd do, I honestly didn't think I was clever enough.

But now I've done it… well, this process has unlocked something in me. Firstly, it has given me new respect for authors I have long admired, like Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, Josephine Tey. How they did this on a regular basis, I do not know. And secondly… I want to do this on a regular basis too. Mystery-making was such a stimulating experience. I thought I wanted to write sci-fi audios for the rest of my life, but… maybe I actually want to do whodunnits.

Big Finish, if you're listening, I have something I want to pitch to you…

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By Tim Foley

The writings of Mr Tim Foley, Esq. (audio, theatre, misc)

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Tony Amis Jul 4, 2025

Tim, I loved this story and Its an idea that the BF ranges need. New clear ideas well executed. I hope I'm not being rude but I've struggled with the BF ranges recently. This though was great.

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